

# Introduction

Jewish early childhood education provides a strong foundation for lifelong Jewish engagement for children and families. The *Jewish and Me* folders can be a vibrant part of that learning by helping teachers, children, and families make connections to the stories, concepts, traditions, and values associated with each Jewish holiday. This Teacher's Guide provides tools to use the *Jewish and Me* folders in creative and developmentally appropriate ways that will help lift the pictures off the page and actively engage children.

## The Features of *Jewish and Me*

*Jewish and Me* is comprised of two sets of eight four-page folders: *Fall Holidays* and *Spring Holidays*. Each holiday folder has a clearly laid-out structure that focuses on the main ideas and what we do for each holiday, plus a sidebar that expands on the ideas, encouraging wider investigations in the classroom. Open-ended questions are presented to encourage discussion, inviting children to apply concepts in the folder to their own lives. Throughout the folders, a playful cat encourages children to join him in getting up, moving, and using large motor skills to celebrate each holiday. The illustrated activities on the back page of each folder encourage creative thought, and the “Family Talk” discussion questions invite the entire family to explore concepts related to the holidays and to find personal meaning in holiday values and traditions. The final folder in each set is designed to be used as a poster or as game cards, which can help reinforce the concepts presented in the previous seven folders. Holiday songs, recipes, and other resources for parents and teachers are available online at [www.behrmanhouse.com/jam](http://www.behrmanhouse.com/jam).

## The Features of the *Jewish and Me Teacher's Guide*

This Teacher's Guide provides a wealth of creative teaching opportunities to help teachers make the best use of the *Jewish and Me* folders. The Teacher's Guide also provides background information for the teacher, supplemental questions for promoting comprehension and lively class discussion, and ideas for hands-on activities that help teachers use each folder as a core element of a developmentally appropriate classroom experience.

In each chapter of this Teacher's Guide, you will find the following elements:

**Overview**—a brief summary and background information about the holiday or story

**Core Concept**—essential information about the holiday's key themes

**Learning Objectives**—learning goals for each folder

**Words to Know**—definitions of key terms that appear in the folder

**Teaching Opportunities**—teaching tips, hands-on activities, and questions to encourage discussion

Many of the ideas and activities described in the “Teaching Opportunities” sections fall into disciplines that address a variety of developmental needs. The categories are accompanied by icons for easy identification:



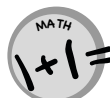
**Science Explorations**—activities for exploring the natural and social worlds of young children



**Art Experiences**—opportunities for using different media and artistic strategies to explore the holiday



**Language Development**—discussion questions and activities for helping children put thoughts into words



**Math Activities**—suggestions for blending holiday concepts with math concepts such as counting, correspondence, and sorting



**Large Motor Skills**—activities for getting children up and moving and engaging their entire body in the celebration of the holiday

## Teaching Young Children

Here are some general tips for using *Jewish and Me* to teach young children the Jewish holidays.

**Let the children guide you:** Children can be keen observers. When we listen to children, we find that they know a great deal about their world and that they have a natural curiosity to learn more. As you start teaching each holiday, ask the children what they already know about the holiday and what they would like to know. You can shape your study of the holiday to address the children’s most passionate questions.

**Use project starters:** You can also spark children’s curiosity and questions by including project starters—objects or experiences that help introduce the concepts in *Jewish and Me*. For example, show your class a shofar or a seder plate and let the children explore the object’s appearance and properties *before* you explain what it is. These provocations can be used to pique the children’s interest and guide your teaching of each holiday.

**Engage the family:** Consider sending each *Jewish and Me* folder home when you are finished using it in class. You might include a note telling families what their child has been learning and inviting them to complete the “At Home” activity on page 4 of the folder together. Encourage families to take time to discuss the “Family Talk” question and listen to their child’s ideas. You might want to suggest that families visit [www.behrmanhouse.com/jam](http://www.behrmanhouse.com/jam) before each holiday for songs, recipes, and other fun holiday resources.

There are many ways to engage children’s interest and guide their exploration of the Jewish holidays. Have fun learning!